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ABSTRACT

The Motoric-Perceptual-Conceptual/Behavioral (MPC/B) model, a developmentally eclectic approach to evaluating and remediating learning disabilities in children, is described. The model is explained to view learners and the learning process on three educational levels (preschool, elementary school, and high school/post school), on three subject matter levels (reading, math, and science), and on three developmental levels (motoric, perceptual, and conceptual/behavioral). Emphasized within the MPC/B model is the importance of evaluation in seven areas, including auditory/hearing tests, visually oriented tests, and educational/academic tests. (CL)

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Developmental Eclecticism: An Integrated approach to evaluating and programming for the learning disabled

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Introduction:

Development implies the process of unraveling, evolving and expanding from the basic lower stages of any activity to its more complex or perfect stages. Eclecticism is the selection of a system of thought from a variety of systems. The term implies a systematic balance of the best of the varied systems. (Webster 1974)

In an educational context, developmental eclecticism is an approach which recognizes the evolutionary balance for educational programming for individual learners. It includes motoric, perceptual, conceptual, behavioral (MPC/B) programming derived for an individual learner in a systematic fashion.

The purpose of the present report is to provide a model for such developmentally eclectic evaluation and remediation strategies for individual learners.

Related Review

The disabled learner has been studied by many disciplines (Lerner 1976). Each discipline, reflecting its unique perspective gave a name to this learner and a therapeutic program to match it. Thus, Pannbacker (1968) reviewed 92 terms used in the literature to describe the learning disabled.

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Even within special education, specializations began to emerge. Several systems appropriate for remediation of learning disabilities with their respective proponents have been identified (Myers and Hammill 1969). These systems include the approaches of the theorists emphasizing the motor, the perceptual, oral/graphic language and arithmetic problems. Bush and Waugh (1976) identified theorists in two diagnostic-categories of perceptual-motor and language. Such categorizations, are helpful for communication purposes. However, one is left with the impression that diagnosis and thus remediation follow such categorical lines. Educational programming is thus either perceptual-motor or language or subject-matter oriented, etc.

Piaget's discussion on intellectual development offers more of a continuum approach rather than a categorical one (Phillips 1969). The learner moves from the sensori-motor (0-2) through concrete (2-11) to formal operations phase (11-15 years). Kephart (1971), writing on slow learners, similarly emphasizes the sound motoric basis for advanced conceptual development. Getman (1965) supports a similar viewpoint. Wepman's (1975) developmental model of independent and interdependent motor-perceptual-cognitive variables that lead to the development of formal operations accepts similar premise.

These latter writings suggest that intellectual development is a developmental process. There is a suggestion in these writings that success in academics is a developmental process. To this extent, academic success and intellectual development are a simultaneous process. Educational programming therefore should simultaneously incorporate both

process as well as subject-matter education. However, many current texts in learning disabilities include chapters on one hand with process training e.g. motor, perceptual, and separate chapters dealing with reading, arithmetic etc. emphasizing subject-matter dimensions. (Lerner 1976; Hammill & Bartel 1975; Wallace and Kauffman 1973; Gearheart 1976). The chapter breakdowns are well-intentioned to the extent that it facilitates the communication of presented materials. Once again, the impression is left that the remediation of reading, for example, is a separate and distinct entity from the remediation of perceptual-motor/co-ordination problems. The fact that the roots of language problems may be located at the lower motoric levels is not clearly articulated. There is a need to emphasize that the conceptual level beginnings are at the motoric level. Evaluation/Remedial programs need to incorporate this concept of the continuum.

MPC/B Model

Figure 1 describes the broad components of the MPC/B model. MPC/B stands for Motoric-Perceptual-Conceptual/Behavioral. This title was chosen to particularly emphasize the developmental dimension often overlooked in our subject-matter dominated education systems.

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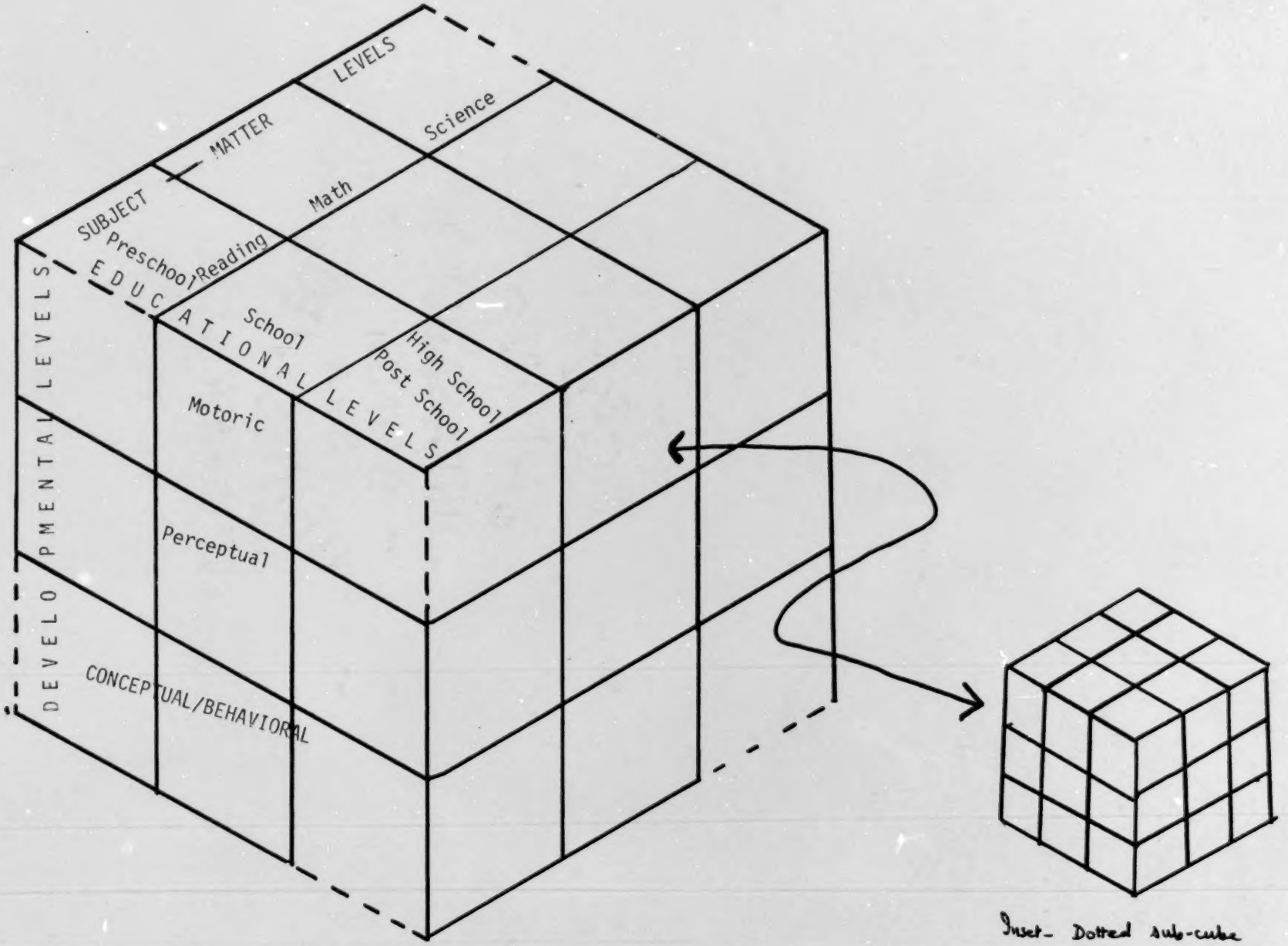
The MPC/B model is best described using the dotted cube. The dots are included to emphasize the continuum-nature of learning. It is an integrative model attempting to incorporate learners at all levels in multiple facets of academic relationships.



Inset- Dotted sub-cube
(see figure 2)

Figure 1 - Dotted Cube describing the principal components of the MPC/B model.

The principal dimensions of the dotted cube are the three primarily school-related variables. These are (1) Educational level; (2) Subject-matter level; (3) Developmental level. The Educational level focuses on the learner. Learners are at all age-levels. Thus the dotted line suggests that educationally the learning continuum could begin at preschool/birth and finish at post-school/death. The subject-matter level deals with the curricular matter of the schools. Reading, math and science are only three of the many other subject areas that can be included in this model because of the dotted nature of this line. The Developmental levels follow the works of Piaget, Kephart and other theorists presented earlier. This level emphasizes that the child's initial learnings are motor, and that, the basis of all behavior is motor (Kephart 1971).

Incorporated with the dotted cube, is the dotted sub-cube (see figure 2) which includes learning-related variables associated with the principal components of the cube. The sub-cube includes three critical levels of (1) communication; (2) memory/feedback; and (3) situational. The communication processes are defined to include receptive, associative and expressive phases of academic tasks. Thus, for example an elementary level learner could have a motorically-related reading problem in the aspect of expressive tasks. Memory/feedback problems can similarly be categorized in terms long-term, intermediate and short-term. The situational variable is included to suggest that some problems exist in certain situations and not in others. A college student dissatisfied with a statistics course may drop that course to get an A in learning disabilities; a patient dissatisfied with his or her doctors finds a new one. Such situationsl options are not available to an elementary child.

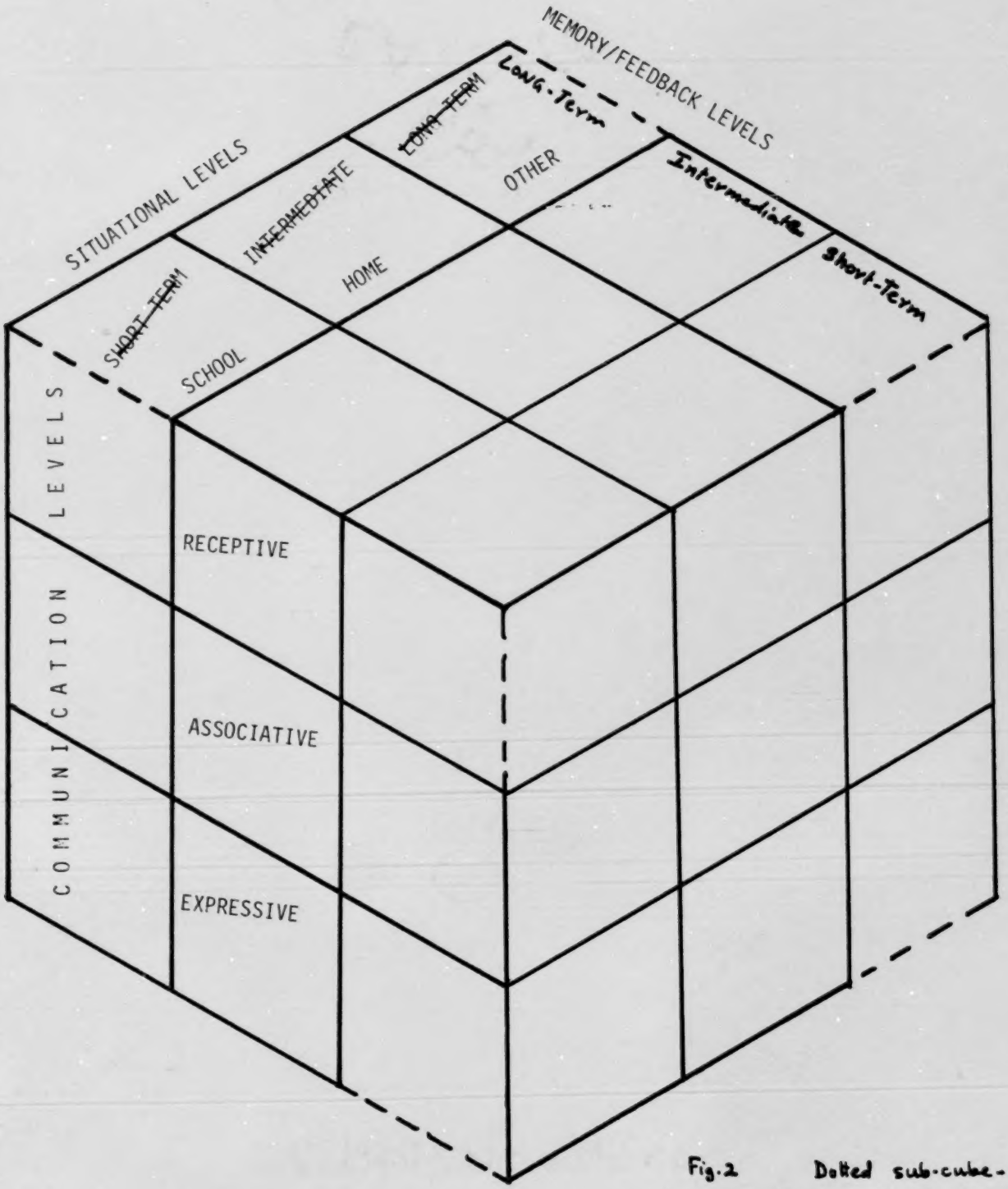


Fig. 2 Dotted sub-cube - includes learning-related variables associated with principal components of MPC/B model

This point of view is consistent with the "schoolgenic" hypothesis described in McCarthy and McCarthy (1971).

Implications and discussion

The above MPC/B model can now be conviently used to form a routine and systematic basis of educational evaluations of learners. In a practical sense, the following seven-areas would cover the components described in the model.

It should be noted that the following classifications are made simple to illustrate the focus of emphasis. They are by no means as clear-cut as presented below.

I. Emphasis on developmental - Motor - Kinesthetic - tactual tests of exceptionality principally at the Gross-Motor level.

II. Emphasis on visual, visual-motor tests of exceptionally (Fine Motor level). . . Visually oriented tests.

III. Emphasis on Auditory/Hearing Tests.

IV. Emphasis on Educational/Academic Tests.

V. Emphasis on Intelligence Tests.

VI. Emphasis on Speech & Language Tests.

VII. Emphasis on Social - Emotional/Personality Tests.

It should be understood that the seven areas do not specify particular test instruments. It thereby preserves the fullest professional autonomy of the individual educational practitioner. More importantly however, it provides the basis for formulating an educational routine similar to a routine medical. Routines have traditionally offered the advantages of (i) greater efficiency; (ii) minimal chances of overlooking

more basic purpose-related functions. For example, at a state CEC Conference in 1975, there was greater divergence among participants on the components of a routine educational than there was on a routine medical. The contribution of such a routine in education would be as great. Firstly, all learners would begin to get comprehensively evaluated. It would begin to recognize learner as a total entity, rather than the one who needs either a speech evaluation or the one who needs a motor evaluation. Such an approach does not remove the specialist, it simply enables the system to more extensively utilize the services of specialists. Secondly, the use of a battery provides the educational practitioner to profile areas of consistencies as well as contradictions for individual learners. Once the educator gets familiar with the profiling routine, it will become a quick and meaningful way of monitoring learner progress and a data-based system of grouping and educational programming. This format would enable practitioners to truly adopt an eclectic educational program. A systematic balance of educational needs can be readily assessed from the present format. Thirdly, profiles are not new to education. The developmental rationale advocated in a routine educational for comprehensive learner profiles is new. The developmental rationale proposing that higher conceptual learning evolves from the basic motoric foundations (Phillips 1969) was attributed to several theorists including Piaget and Kephart.

However, typical educational evaluations have comprised of mostly psychological or standardized tests with little regard to tracing the causes to lower levels. The 7-area framework thus provides not only

comprehensive but also developmental framework of evaluation rather than a selection of instruments based primarily on cost and administrative factors. As is the subject-matter-process evaluation and remediation becomes a simultaneous process. After all one can attempt to teach reading at the motoric as well as at the conceptual levels. Finally, such a model provides enhanced uniformity of thought among practitioners and to that extent improved communications. Parents will have a general educational practitioner who can be in a central position to make knowledgeable referrals.

Summary:

Learners are currently obtaining excellent but isolated specialized services. Educational programs are either subject-matter oriented or developmental process oriented. Educational evaluations vary in scope and extent from one school system to the next. A developmentally eclectic model (MPC/B) for educational evaluation and remediation is offered. It recognizes learners and learner-related variables on a continuum and accommodates subject-matter-developmental variables as a simultaneous process. An evaluation battery and implications of its use for an educational routine, remediation and communication are discussed.

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